

Special Coverage of New York's Historic Rejection of the Bush Agenda

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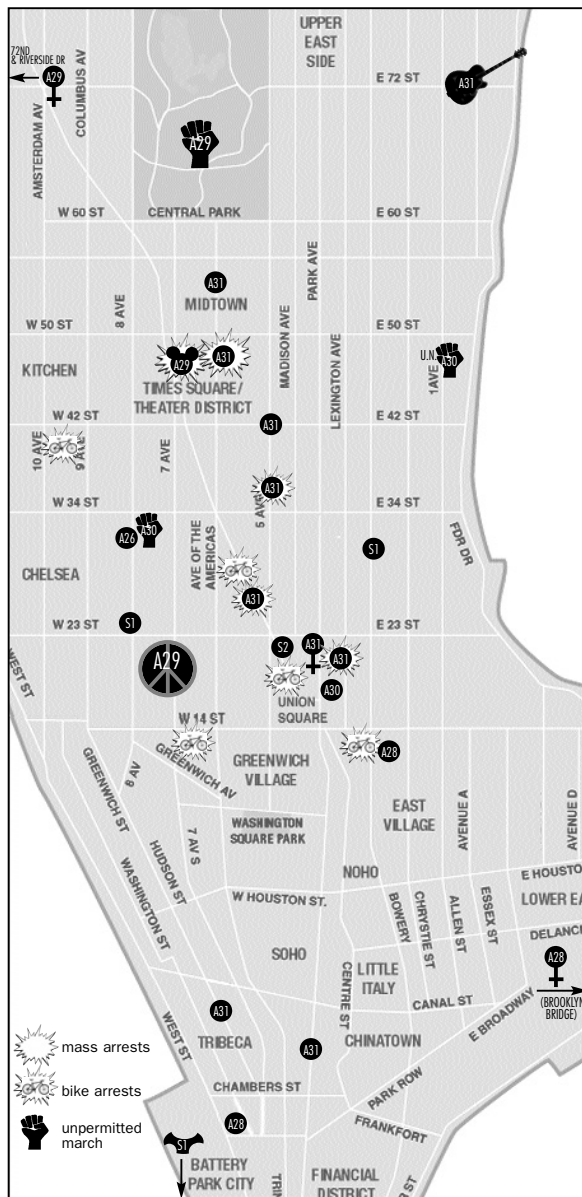
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34 E. 29th St. 2nd Floor
NY, NY 10016

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HELL ON WHEELS

GOP INVADES CITY, NYPD MAKES AN EXAMPLE OUT OF BELOVED BIKERS

BY A.K. GUPTA

Bicycling, to me, is one of life's great joys. I've biked from Connecticut to Montreal, Pittsburgh to D.C., and across New York State. Most of my time is spent navigating the asphalt paths of New York City, jockeying with cabs, cars, trucks, pedestrians and a hundred other obstacles. But as often as I can, I join in the monthly Critical Mass rides, transforming the city with pedal power.

In Critical Mass, bicyclists take to the streets in numbers large enough so that they, not cars, dominate traffic. It began in San Francisco over a decade ago and has reportedly spread to more than 400 cities worldwide.

A bike-friendly city is cleaner, quieter and healthier. In the last year, bicycling has exploded in the city. Enthusiasts point to the inaugural "Bike Summer" of 2003. Dozens of events gave thousands the confidence to bike New York's perilous streets for the first time. Critical Mass grew from hundreds of riders to thousands. Brooklynites launched their own Critical Mass this summer. I went on the July ride and it was enormous, perhaps 2,000 riders.

So I reacted with dismay but not surprise when the New York Police Department issued a letter essentially outlawing Critical Mass on the eve of the Republican National Convention. The letter mandated that cyclists had to obey all the rules of the road or risk summons or arrest.

It sounds reasonable, but traffic laws are designed for speedy cars, not leisurely pedalers. The police normally take a hands-off approach to Critical Mass. They know well that making riders obey traffic laws creates far more chaos and danger than just letting cyclists take the streets for a few hours.

On Friday, Aug. 27, the police leafletted Critical Mass riders assembling in Union Square with flyers placing numerous, and absurd, demands on cyclists. Don't ride more than two abreast. Stay close to the curb. Don't block traffic. Forget that bikes are traffic.

With 5,000 cyclists, the ride was New York's biggest yet by far. There was a imposing police presence offset by applause from pedestrians as the riders took off from the park as usual, down all of Broadway. The police let it proceed, but they chopped up the ride near the end to let crosstown traffic through. The decision seemed capricious and inefficient. Letting cars and cyclists alternate slowed everyone down.

Critical Mass normally ends with a party. According to organizers, their planned party on a West Side pier was canceled after the police leaned on the owner of the venue — an old tugboat called the "Frying Pan."

As a fallback, St. Marks Church on 2nd Ave. and 10th St. opened its doors to the cyclists, but with so many thousands, the streets surrounding the church were jammed with bike riders.

Arrests had already occurred in other locations. They were clearly pre-meditated, unnecessary and arbitrary: streets suddenly blockaded and everyone swept up; orange netting stretched across some intersections.

But the big game was on 2nd Ave. By denying cyclists a safe space to end the ride, the police created the illegal conditions. And they used this as a pretext to attack the riders. Police scooters surged into the crowd. Riot cops seized intersections. Low-flying helicopters chopped the air overhead.

Hundreds of pedestrians gathered, many angered at the display of force.

Within minutes, groups of cyclists were surrounded, bikes tossed on trucks, riders arrested and flexcuffed. The police brass were present, directing the action.

I ran into one friend wheeling her bike on the sidewalk. I assumed she was safe, but later found out that she had been arrested. She was given conflicting orders while trying to leave the scene. Pedestrians were allowed to pass by one knot of cops, but she was ordered in the other direction, toward cops

who arrested her while she walked her bike.

The next day, Saturday, Aug. 28, about 100 police showed up outside the storefront of a bike convergence space on East Houston St. in an act of intimidation, organizers said. And on Aug. 29, the day of the big march, scores of riders in a "bike bloc" were surrounded and arrested.

I spoke to one organizer who said this is all part of a police strategy to target cyclists. It is certainly a political decision. After all, why let the ride take place for six years without incident, only to outlaw it when freedom-

hating Republicans invade the city?

The police say they are enforcing the law and protecting public safety, but this is a hollow claim. If this were true, aggressive SUV drivers who flood downtown on weekend nights would be locked up by the hundreds and their vehicles impounded.

The next Critical Mass will be Sept. 24. I wonder if the city will continue its crack-down. And I wonder what purpose is served by declaring war on people who want to make the city friendlier, livelier and more livable. Regardless, I'll be there.



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GRATITUDE: As abortion providers brave death threats nationwide, thousands march in NYC for reproductive freedom. PHOTO: PETER HOLDERNESS

BY PORTLAND AND NYC INDYMEDIA

Aug. 28's March for Women's Lives crossed the Brooklyn Bridge and rallied at City Hall to make sure issues of reproductive health — global family planning; real sex education; accessible, safe and legal abortion; birth-control options; the right to privacy regarding sexuality; and equal access to health care — are part of the national political dialogue. Demonstrators estimated that as many as 16,000 people trekked over the bridge, chanting "Bush — Out of My Bush!" Some marchers, disappointed in the over-

women so we can have a healthy, psychologically well-adjusted, new generation of people." —Dara Silverman, Brooklyn

"Outlawing it wouldn't stop abortion — it would just kill people. And there's no money for foster care."

—Jonathan Lawrence, western Mass.

"As a teacher, it's really hard to give sex ed. You have to worry about getting in trouble. Kids shouldn't have to talk to friends and hear all this stuff that doesn't really make sense."

—Elisabeth Hamilton, Brooklyn

A WOMB OF OUR OWN

whelmingly white turnout, discussed ways to build a more inclusive movement. Code Pink and the Radical Cheerleaders brought a festive flair to the multigenerational scene.

The *Indy* asked demonstrators why they came out for freedom of choice:

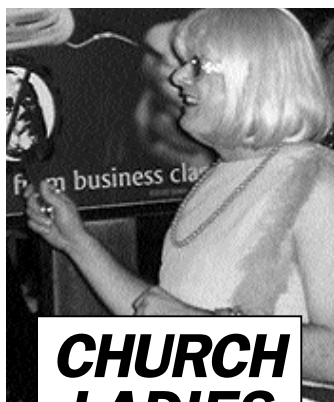
"I'm reaching the end of my reproductive years, but I think it's important to support the younger generation. I had one abortion when I was in my early 30s. Unfortunately, it's pretty hard to meet a decent guy, and the guy who got me pregnant, I had grave reservations about his parenting skills. So I didn't want to have a child with him. We have to make it a choice for

"There's no contraceptives or real sex education. They're afraid sex ed will encourage teens to have sex. People are going to have sex anyway — they should at least do it safely. And if something happens, they'll know what to do, who to go to. The most important thing is information — and the government isn't giving us any."

—Serena Hui, Manhattan

"There are already enough unwanted children, and there are already women dying from unsafe, illegal abortions in other countries. I don't want to see that happen here. And I don't want it to happen there, either."

—Sarah Gardam, Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania



CHURCH LADIES FOR CHOICE AT THE MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

The always-stylish Church Ladies for Choice serenaded marchers with a lively hymn about microbicides. These are gels being tested to prevent HIV and pregnancy when applied before sex. Researchers say microbicides won't hit the shelves for five years. Advocates blame a lack of money allocated to the project.

"We're here to talk about the super lube for receptive sex partners," said Church Lady Madge R. Deegan. "Condoms work almost every time, but we need a backup. Many women don't have the power to get their partners to wear a condom. We need the backup of microbicides." —SUZY SUBWAYS

AIDS PROTESTERS BARE WITNESS

ACT UP TAKES 8TH AVE FOR AFRICANS WITH HIV

BY SUZY SUBWAYS

Nude AIDS activists led by ACT UP New York stopped traffic on 33rd St. and 8th Ave. by Madison Square Garden at noon Aug. 26, shedding their clothes to reveal "Drop the Debt" and "Stop AIDS" stenciled across their backs. As a crowd of hundreds gathered and news cameras rolled, the six women and four men chanted, "Bush, Stop AIDS — Drop the Debt Now!"

Nine were arrested in all their glory after standing firm for 15 minutes. One woman got dressed, blending with bystanders; two clothed activists got busted for hanging a banner and were charged with reckless endangerment after police climbed a ladder to intercept them.

"Today's action tells the naked truth about the lack of compassion the Bush administration has demonstrated to people with AIDS," said Robert Dabney, spokesperson for the Health Global Access Project. "Fifteen billion dollars a year is what experts are saying Africa needs to marshal to fight AIDS. Fifteen billion is also what African countries are paying on their debt every year," he said. With 9,000 people dying of AIDS daily, most of them in southern African countries that cannot afford to give their citizens HIV treatment, developing countries' debt to rich countries and financial institutions is literally killing people, protest organizers from ACT UP New York argue.

The Global AIDS Fund, a massive international effort, has requested \$1 billion yearly from the United States. Unlike President Bush's unilateral plan, which buys expensive patented drugs and pushes abstinence, the Global Fund relies on generic medicines and condoms.

Bush asked Congress for \$200 million for the fund, which in turn allocated \$524 million — with strings attached, Dabney said. "The U.S. contribution has to be no more than 33 percent of the total. At this point, that would cut out \$120 million. But other countries don't operate on the same fiscal year. If you're going to give people a matching requirement, be realistic about the time frame in which they need to raise that money. Don't give people only four or five months."

Taking arrests during the lead-up to the Republican Convention, the activists braved bemused police officers and shouts of, "Are you free later?" Office worker Liz Fountain, who caught the first seconds of coverage on New York 1, ran down to the street with a friend. "We wanted to see how the police would react," she said. "I mean, you can't manhandle them. They're naked!" Returning to her skyscraper cubicle, Fountain nodded toward the protesters and said, "This is awesome."



CHEEKY ACTIVISTS drop their drawers to "Drop the Debt." PHOTO: FREDASKEW.COM

'WE'RE DISGUSTED WITH THIS MAN'

A Half-Million Marchers Say No to the Bush Agenda

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY SUZY SUBWAYS

It was big – the biggest protest ever at a political convention in American history. And despite all the scare stories about rabid “anarchists,” it was almost completely peaceful.

On the afternoon of Aug. 29, hundreds of thousands of people marched through the streets of Manhattan to protest the regime and policies of George W. Bush. The demonstrators stepped off from Seventh Avenue and 23rd Street around 11:30 a.m., walked north past Madison Square Garden and circled back east and south to Union Square. Five hours later, there were still people filing down Broadway. Organizers from United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ) declared that the march drew 500,000 people. That would mean that the day's protesters against Bush far exceeded the 376,000 New Yorkers who voted for him in 2000.

The marchers ranged from octogenarians to babies in strollers sheltered from the sun by “We Say No to the Bush Agenda” banners. They were united by one thing: disgust for the Bush administration policies on just about every issue, from abortion rights to xenophobia.

“I teach history, and George Bush is the worst president the United States has ever had,” said Alex Boulton, a 59-year-old veteran from Baltimore.

“He’s tearing up the whole world. The poor are getting poorer,” said Robert, a trim-bearded Lower East Side Puerto Rican in a red basketball jersey.

“It’s the worst administration I’ve ever lived through. It’s almost like a fascist state,” said Stan Romaine, 83, a World War II veteran from the Long Island suburb of Great Neck who has been active in the peace movement for more than 50 years. He also had harsh words for Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “I’m outraged that we can’t go into Central Park. Our mayor rates grass over civil rights.”

Most marchers mentioned multiple issues. “This stupid war. The lack of funds for education and health care,” said Anita Antonetty, 47, a Bronx labor activist and Puerto Rican independentista who brought her 16-year-old son.

“He’s anti-choice. He’s destroying our country’s economy. He’s sending poor kids to die so rich people can benefit. He takes money away from New York and then has his convention here. He rewards corporations for shipping jobs offshore,” said Jennifer Yerkes, 29, part of a “Brooklyn Girls” contingent. And, she added, Bush has run up the deficit so much that “they should have those credit counselors calling him up. ‘Would you like to consolidate your country’s debts, Mr. Bush?’”

“We should be spending our tax dollars for jobs and transportation, not for war and occupation,” said Kevin Hussey, 53, a railroad-track repairman from New Jersey marching with the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees union.

‘FOUR MORE MONTHS’

The march began festively but relatively quiet, except for a group singing old union songs. Scores of women in Code Pink regalia – pink slips and Statue of Liberty tiaras in shades from pale pastel to brilliant magenta – packed West 22nd St. The marchers broke into cheers when they passed the “Save America – Defeat Bush” sign on UNITE union headquarters on 25th St. and when a man flashed a “Draft the Bush Twins” sign out a window. They got louder when

Madison Square Garden came into view, chanting “Four More Months.”

Across from the Garden stood RightMarch, one of about four clusters of 50 to 100 counterdemonstrators, most waving anti-abortion signs. One woman held an “Islam Supports John Kerry” sign and wore an “Intolerance Is a Beautiful Thing” T-shirt. “Racism is a sin,” a Black railroad worker called out, and the protesters joined him in chanting it.

The southeast corner of 34th St. was packed with police in riot gear. Boos erupted when Bush appeared on the Fox News tele-screen on the wall of Macy’s.

If any part of the economy was booming, it was the market for anti-Bush apparel. Protesters wore many of the usual T-shirts: Bush’s picture over “International Terrorist,” “Somewhere in Texas a Village Is Missing Its Idiot,” “The Only Bush I Trust Is My Own,” and the like. One man carried an “Another Jewish Mets Fan Against the Occupation” placard.

The one exception to the march’s peacefulness came around 3:30 p.m., in front of the Garden, when a green paper dragon a group of protesters were carrying caught fire. Barbara Lee of Brooklyn, who was carrying the tail, says she smelled “combustible fluid” and then “the kids ran off and the dragon’s head burst into flames.” Police at first hesitated, she says, and then “started violently pushing and arresting people at random. People who weren’t even marching with the dragon got grabbed.” About 10 people were arrested, one charged with arson and the others accused of assaulting officers while trying to free him.

PROTEST NEOPHYTES

Many in the crowd were relatively new to activism. Carlos Soligo, 35, of Brooklyn didn’t become political until September 11. “We heard a lot of things about Bush before he was elected, but after 9/11 they started coming true,” he said. “This is the least we can do. In other countries people are dying. We should boycott Coca-Cola for killing union leaders in Colombia.”

Latasha Harris, 23, of Cochran, Georgia, had previously been active in the Dean presidential campaign and on abortion-rights issues. “It was very difficult for me to get health care. Three million people have lost their health care.”

Victoria Compton, 37, drove 3,000 miles from an island in the northwest corner of Washington with a banner showing a photo



PHOTO: PETER HOLDERNESS

of an Iraqi father cradling the smashed body of his daughter, next to the legend “Not in Our Name, Dubya – Citizens of San Juan County, Washington.” She was anti-Bush, but “totally not” political, she explained, until “pictures like this really tipped me over. I got so worked up I started getting donations for this banner.”

Others were veteran protesters. Diana Gould, 71, of Manhattan, recalled marching against the Vietnam war, and said that if the Bush administration looked at history, America wouldn’t be falling into another quagmire of “pointless killing.” She said, “We’re going to have to demonstrate plenty if Kerry’s elected.”

WHAT ABOUT KERRY?

A substantial number of marchers wore Kerry-for-President buttons, stickers, and T-shirts – but their opinions of the Democratic candidate were divided between enthusiastic and cynical. “I’m not particularly a John Kerry supporter,” said Connie Everett, 55, of Columbus, Ohio, but he’s “trying to spend every minute” of his time working to defeat Bush.

Alex Boulton, who served during the Vietnam war, was more positive. Kerry “was saying a lot of the same things that me and my fellow vets felt,” he said. “I have friends who knew him in Boston, and he’s just a regular guy, very idealistic and hard-working.”

“I think we’re making a mistake in seeing this as merely an anti-Bush rally,” said

Herman Jerome, a guidance counselor at a South Bronx high school marching with the Council of Radical Educators. “It’s also an anti-war-in-Iraq rally. We have to be protesting both camps.”

As the march ended, marshals urged the demonstrators not to linger.

“Please keep moving when you get to Union Square,” one announced. “Subway service will take you to any part of the city.” Nudge-nudge, wink-wink.

So several thousand people closed the afternoon by heading north to the verboten verdure of Central Park. People frolicked in the late afternoon sun on the Great Lawn, enjoying a cool breeze after a long day of marching. Upper Manhattan liberals mingled with downtown street performers like the Billionaires for Bush.

Panama Alba, a longtime city organizer and a member of the Young Lords Party in the 1960s, was more critical. “The people from UFPJ made a tremendous tactical error. At minimum, they should have encouraged people to come to Central Park,” he said. He also argued that the movement needed to have more people of color involved: “There are a lot of people who aren’t here, because the leadership of this protest is lily-white.”

On the other hand, he added, “The march is a testament to the massive opposition to the war and the Bush administration, and everything from ending the war, to gay rights, to workers’ rights. People should feel proud of what we’ve done today.”

“It definitely exceeded all our expectations,” UFPJ spokesperson Bill Dobbs reflected two days later.

Given the day’s torrid, humid weather, marching down the West Side Highway – the rally site offered by the city and briefly accepted by UFPJ – “would have been horrendous,” Dobbs said, adding that the organizers wouldn’t have done anything differently. They were dealing with the same administration that stifled UFPJ’s February 2003 anti-war march, he noted. This time, police also tried to force TV-news satellite trucks to leave before the group’s press conference the morning of the march.

“It’s fascinating to see the mayor and the police commissioner compliment us after they tried to scuttle this protest,” he concluded. “We were denied a very important right, to have a crowd and a political discussion. There’s a very serious struggle around the right to dissent that has to be part of everybody’s work now.”

Mouse Bloc Gnaws on RNC Delegates

RNC delegates hoped on Aug. 29 to enjoy a few hours in the Theatre District. Instead, they were upstaged by the Mouse Bloc, a looseknit network of roving protesters whose antics included dressing as mice in order to torment GOP elephants.



Mouse Bloc members did everything from banner drops to hounding delegates outside of theatres. “It was more amusing than anything,” wrote Chris Garaffa of Bridgeport, Connecticut, “watching a scraggly anarchist asking well-dressed men and women – clearly visible with their red bags – if they’d send their kids to Iraq.”

Gregory Broderick from Ha! Comedy club on 369 W. 46th St. applauded the Mouse Bloc’s performance. “This town has become more and more Republican since 9/11. As a comedy promoter, it hurts my business. Especially the censorship.”

—John Tarleton & SS

SIAFU

THE ANTS THAT TAKE DOWN ELEPHANTS

With their original, hip-hop flavored chants and matching red T-shirts, Siafu – a mostly people of color crew from the Bay Area – fired up the anti-imperialist contingent at the UFPJ and Still We Rise marches. Siafu member Liz Derias spoke with the *Indy* on Sunday.

What does the name Siafu mean?

Siafu is the name of an ant from West Africa that's so highly organized that it's able to take down large animals, even elephants.

When did your group form?

We came together around protesting the RNC. Thirty-nine of us flew here. We're all activists around things like immigration, housing, employment, health – we organize our communities of color in the Bay Area, so it's kind of natural for us to work together.

What are some of your points of unity?

We are all anti-imperialists. Bush's regime is one of the biggest threats to the world today. We agree that we need to not only go for the ballot but also go to the streets to get him out of office.

What are your plans for the rest of the week?

We're going to support the Still We Rise March. We've been working with them since January. We got a chance to meet everyone face-to-face this past week and do some outreach with them, and we're going to continue working with them after the RNC. Is there anything you would want to say to New Yorkers?

We've talked to a ton of New Yorkers throughout the past few days. We've done outreach in Central Park and Flushing, and people know that Bush is using September 11's tragedy to make a profit. They don't want him in office, and they don't want him in their city.

—SS

NEW YORK RISING

The birth of a movement led by people who live the issues

By SUZY SUBWAYS

More than 50 New York City community-based organizations led by people of color and poor people marched on Madison Square Garden under the Still We Rise banner as the Republican National Convention began there Monday.

"People came out of the shelters, out of the sweatshops, the soup kitchens, and into the streets, with a platform that speaks to all of us as New Yorkers," says Louie Jones, a New York City AIDS Housing Network (NYCAHN) board member who has lived with HIV for 18 years and was formerly homeless.

Instead of each planning a rally around its own issue, NYCAHN, Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), Make the Road by Walking, Mothers on the Move, Housing Works and other groups started working last summer for a united action demanding housing, immigrants' and welfare rights, health care and HIV services, and justice for those in the court and prison system.

"Issues overlap in the communities most targeted by the Bush administration's agenda," said Julie Davids, director of the Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization for Power. "This kind of coalition allows people to bring their whole selves and their whole experience."

"In Bushwick, Brooklyn, half the population lives below the poverty level," Jesus Gonzalez, 19, of the Bushwick community organization, Make the Road by Walking, told the rally at 30th Street and 8th Ave. "We've got 30 kids in a classroom, three kids sharing one book.... We don't have college recruiters in our school, but we have military recruiters."

Make the Road not only tackles education issues, but also fights for translation services in the predominantly Latino neighborhood's

hospitals and opposes the expansion of youth detention centers, organizer Jose Lopez said.

Natasha Missick is an employment specialist for University Settlement on the Lower East Side. But due to funding cuts, all that remains of her joblessness program is her title. She now helps families avoid eviction, as part of the center's housing program. "Neighborhoods like Chinatown and the Lower East Side were directly impacted by 9/11 – by unemployment, environmental and health issues," Missick said.

FUREE, multiracial and led by women with low or no income, struggles with the welfare system. Wanda Imasuen spoke of the self-respect that working with the group gave her.

Respect led the day. "People who've been marginalized were speaking, marching, and leading the press conference," says Monami Maulik of Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM), an organization of South Asian immigrants that mobilizes detainees and their families for immigrant rights.

Organizers estimated attendance to be about 20,000. Police – who separated the rally into two penned sections and told pro-

testers not to walk on the sidewalk in some places or to re-enter the metal-barricade pens once they'd left – put the figure at 5,000.

Marchers formed delegations and stuck to them, a structure that Davids said demonstrated the accountability of each group to the community it represents. "It's a powerful thing, and in some cases it's a more important kind of power than coming together as individuals," she said.

"We want to build solid relationships with allies, including activists who risk a lot and participate in mobilizations," Maulik went on. "We believe in connecting mass mobilizations with community-based movements, and we want to build relationships in order to mobilize not just for the RNC, but beyond it."

NYCAHN's Shirlene Cooper said Still We Rise brought the city to the world – at a moment when the world was watching. "Before the convention, we already knew that 80 percent of New Yorkers didn't want it here," she says. "New York was ready. We prepared ourselves for Bush's visit for a very long time. We were ready."



MARCH FOR OUR LIVES: Thousands take to the streets without a permit PHOTO: PETER HOLDERNESS

Police Pounce on Poor People's March

By JOHN TARLETON

Michael Duke was listening to radio reports Monday evening of an unpermitted protest march advancing west on 23rd Street in Chelsea when he stepped out of his home to see what was going on.

"I intended to watch from the sidewalk but was swept along," said Duke, 63, of his decision to join the march. "It was hard to resist, especially when people came by playing their drums."

Moments later he found himself in the middle of a turbulent confrontation between hundreds of protesters and police at 29th Street and 8th Avenue within sight of Madison Square Garden.

"Most of the march had passed through the intersection when all of a sudden the police came charging out from the east side of 29th street carrying these six-foot long metal barricades that they were ramming into people.

It was totally unnecessary."

Other marchers reported the same experience. "It happened all of a sudden," said Blythe, a young woman from Boston. "We were walking and then suddenly a group of police rushed in with barricades."

With police trying to pen them in on both sides of 29th Street, the frightened protesters fought police for control of the barricades under the bright lights of numerous television cameras. With parts of the crowd surging forward, several police officers drove their motorcycles into the melee, almost running over an *Indy* reporter's foot.

The police were able to use overwhelming numbers to force most protesters onto the sidewalk before allowing people to filter out via both sides of 29th Street. A young woman knelt in the middle of the west side of the intersection and scrawled "Freedom of Speech" with a piece of chalk before she was dragged away by a half-dozen police.

The march, organized by the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, drew about several thousand participants. Beginning across the street from the United Nations, the demonstrators made their way down Second Avenue before turning west on 23rd St., where they found a deep vein of support.

"I'm glad people are worried and making an effort to change things," said Keri Lyn, a first-year student at the School of Visual Arts (SVA) who rushed down from her dormitory room to take pictures.

"It's pretty impressive. I've never seen anything like it," said another SVA student, who also had a camera in hand.

Kris, an office worker from Queens, who was waiting for a bus at the corner of 23rd and Madison, said outsourcing of jobs was her top concern. Her company recently laid off 3,000 workers. "I hope they disrupt the convention," she said. "I don't think Bush is paying attention to anything that is being

said. He's just using 9/11 to advance his political agenda."

"It's great," said Sean Casey, who was having dinner at the Comfort Diner on 23rd Street when he heard the approaching crowd. "People are motivated. People are out there in the streets."

"This is New York," added his girlfriend, Deb Leipzig. "People aren't afraid to speak their minds."

As the march moved through Chelsea, people cheered and waved from their balconies. One small storefront flashed its lights repeatedly as demonstrators streamed by. When the crowd turned right to Eighth Avenue, a big, muscular man appeared in the second floor window of the New York Sports Clubs gym and pointed to his red, white and blue T-shirt that read "Fuck Bush." The marchers roared their approval.

Further up the street, the police were waiting.

We all know both the Republicans and Democrats are on a perpetual quest for the pot of gold, but these days it feels like they've stolen away with the whole damn rainbow. Between the post-9/11 ubiquity of red, white and blue, and the terror alerts vacillating between yellow and orange with every new Bush popularity poll, Crayolas seem to have lost their childlike innocence.

But Code Pink's Women Against War Concert at Riverside Church reclaimed at least one color. From the cardboard cutouts decked out in pink slips demarcating each aisle, to the row of pink doves stretched across the stage, performers and organizers roundly rejected both the terror alerts and the red white and blue — in favor of pink, for peace.

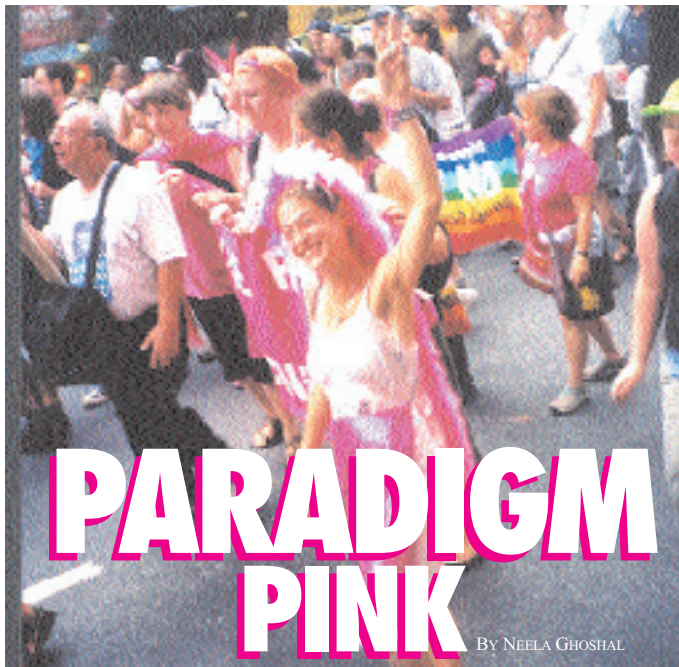
Code Pink was founded in November 2002 by a coalition of women fed up with what they saw as the Bush administration's relentless warmongering. They held a daily vigil in front of the White House for four months, demanding that the U.S. refrain from pre-emptive strikes against Iraq. The vigil culminated with a 10,000 woman-strong march against war on International Women's Day, March 8, 2003.

Bush went to war anyway, but the women of Code Pink continued to fight for peace.

"We went to Iraq before the war to tell the women and men and children of Iraq that we were opposed to the war, and then when the bombs started falling, we went back again and again," said Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink and one of the emcees of Saturday's event.

Code Pink combines arts and vaudeville with serious political analysis. Most speakers focused on the inadequacy and unwillingness of both political parties to pursue peace and justice and the need to keep fighting to build a global peace movement structured around feminist principles of equality and connectedness.

Eve Ensler, creator of *The Vagina Monologues*, commented that although significant differences do exist between Bush and



Kerry, both men's platforms are built around "oppression and domination."

"We know in our minds, in our bodies, in our spirits, that there is another paradigm that is desperate to emerge in the world," said Ensler. "What does that paradigm look like? First, it recognizes that you cannot bomb people into trust and democracy and hope."

Speakers and performers seamlessly swayed the tenor in the chapel between solemn respect and raucous laughter. Hip-hop poet and performance artist Aya de Leon initially

bemused older members of the mostly white audience with a vigorous call and response, but the crowd slowly rose to the occasion. Concertgoers chimed in with callbacks and applause as de Leon addressed a broad range of topics, from sex education and same-sex marriage to the U.S. bombing of Vieques.

Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* spoke on the media's role in blinding North Americans to the realities of U.S. empire and the importance of challenging corporate media. Singer/songwriter Pamela Means joined

forces with spoken-word artist Alix Olson, rocking out on songs about the Patriot Act and the power of the people to reclaim our rights. One song queried, "What's the matter with the brains of the big boys with the big money?"

The evening took on a graver tone as Code Pink honored recipients of the "Pink Badge of Courage," including the father of the first U.S. soldier killed in Iraq; a young woman who returned from Baghdad to form Iraq Veterans Against the War; and conscientious objector Camilo Mejia and his mother Maritza Castillo, among others.

"[The war] was a wake-up call," said Castillo, whose son could not attend because he is serving a one-year prison sentence in Oklahoma for refusing to return to duty in Iraq. "I was working, trying to survive, while the politicians of this country wove the destruction of the world."

Fernando Suarez, speaking of his son Jesus and the more than 150 other Latino/a soldiers killed in Iraq, said, "I demand that Mr. Bush doesn't use my people for empire in other parts of the world."

The overarching mood of Women Against War was positive and inspirational.

"Everything was great," said audience member Edith Pearlman, an elderly woman leaving the event with her daughter. She showed off her newly purchased "Lick Bush" T-shirt, then turned and mock-scolded her daughter, "You're turning me into a feminist."

No matter who wins the election, Code Pink's infectious energy and drive for change seem unlikely to wane.

Referring to the battles in Najaf, Medea Benjamin observed, "The fact that we destroyed that holy city will be a shame that we will have to bear for our whole lives — but what we need to do is turn that shame into change."

Code Pink was present at the RNC protests and will host future anti-war events around the country.

For more info: www.codepink4peace.org

Harlem Sounds Off

UPTOWN'S NOT DOWN WITH THE GOP

BY NEELA GHOSHAL

If the delegates at the Republican National Convention had wanted to sample the real New York, they would have left their swanky midtown hotels and taken a trip uptown. No, not on the upper deck of a shiny red Big Apple tour bus designed for gazing down at the Black folks from above, with a



"THEY DON'T HELP DEMOCRACY," says Harlem resident Karole Schuemacher of Republicans. PHOTO: NEELA GHOSHAL

quick stop for "authentic" soul food at Sylvia's.

They would've headed down to the subway and hopped on an uptown D train. They might have seen all the white faces disappear at 59th Street, bitten their nails in apprehension as the train hurtles up to 125th Street. There, they might have found a different story from the tall tale described by Mayor Michael Bloomberg at the convention's opening.

They wouldn't have seen many of the "RNC Not Welcome" signs and anti-Bush rainbow flags that are everywhere in Greenwich Village store fronts. But they might have met someone like Michael Herriot, a wheelchair-bound man in his 50's, sitting in the shade outside a bodega across from his building on 124th Street and 7th Avenue.

"I'd better get a cigarette if we're going to talk about this," laughed Herriot, when asked his opinion about the Republicans' choice of New York for their convention. Lighting up, he grumbled, "What I say is, they'd better get their ass out of New York."

"Republicans are good," he intoned, "for those that got money, those looking to get money, those dealing in money. They're not for the little man — they ain't never been. My view on Republicans is, they're basically plantation slave owners."

Up on 135th Street, lifelong Harlem resident Karole Schuemacher agreed. "They don't help the black people, they don't help the poor people, they don't help democracy," she ticked off. "We need housing, jobs. We don't have enough teachers in the schools. Testing might help the schools, but they're not prepared, they don't have the resources," she added, referring to Bush's "No Child Left Behind" policy.

Schuemacher and Herriot could call on a multitude of statistics to back up their impressions of the impact that a trio of Republican administrations — from Bloomberg in City Hall to Pataki in Albany, and Bush in the White House — have had on the mostly poor and working class residents of Harlem. According to the New York City Comptroller's office, New York City has lost 211,300 jobs since December 2000, a crisis that has hit communities of color the hardest.

"We're all reeling from the recent report from the

Community Service Society that puts the unemployment rate for Black men between 18 and 58 at one in two," said Nellie Hester Bailey of the Harlem Tenants Council. Such unemployment worries are compounded by federal budget cuts which eliminated nearly \$40 million in Section 8 voucher funds for New York City this year.

"The money that is fueling Bush's war machine is taken away from jobs, housing and health care," argued Bailey, a lead organizer for Harlem's Sept. 2 anti-RNC march.

In this context, Harlem residents are particularly upset by the funding the city appears to be pouring into the Republican convention. Tony, a Harlem resident, laid it out as he visited with a friend who sells incense on 125th and Lenox Avenue.

"They got cops on the train 24 hours a day," he complained. "You got police on every single corner from 53rd to 14th St. They got FBI, CIA, regular cops, detectives, cops running around on motor scooters. The city says they ain't got money — then how do they have money for all these police? They've got sniffing dogs in the hotels. Who's paying these people? Who's paying for these dogs?"

Down at 109th St. and Central Park West, Eddie, a newspaper vendor, perused *New York Post* and *Daily News* photos of Sunday's United for Peace and Justice march alongside his supervisor, Michael Bashir.

"See that sign?" asked Bashir, indicating a large image of Bush's name in a circle, with a red line slashed across it. "I've got a T-shirt like that. That man has got to go!"

Impressed, Eddie inquired, "Yo, where'd you get that shirt, Papi?"

Bashir said he planned to protest outside Madison Square Garden in his anti-Bush shirt on Thursday night, when Bush accepts his party's nomination.

Then he proudly pointed out a sticker on the side of his van which perhaps best summed up the overwhelming sentiment in Harlem towards Bush and the convention. Under a colorful illustration of the President in handcuffs, the sticker read, "If Bush weren't white, he'd be in jail by now."

'THIS IS AN UPRISING'

Thousands throw down in direct action carnival; more than 1,100 arrested in police sweeps

BY JED BRANDT

Direct-action radicals took center stage on Aug. 31 in dozens of loosely-coordinated roving protests throughout the city. If New York *Newsday* was right to say that Sunday's mass march was "nice and easy," then Tuesday's disruption — called for at the start of the summer by an anonymous collective — was the "shout heard round the world." Police said more than 1,100 people were arrested in actions that started at Wall Street and then spread across the city, from the "Shut-Up-a-Thon" at Fox News to the "Man in Black Bloc" walking the line against a Johnny Cash-themed GOP party on the Upper East Side.

"This is on-the-ground resistance to the policymakers and a show of solidarity to the rest of the world," said a tired Joseph Phelan of the Basement Cluster. "The hundreds of thousands were great on Sunday, but we don't need to ask permission to dissent. We need confrontation for people in Iraq and Palestine, everywhere people are dealing with the repressive policies of the Bush administration, to know we won't take it anymore."

With no clear center to the protests, Union Square served as a staging area for protesters and

police alike. Undercover cops clad in scarves and fatigues roved through the restive, festive crowd making seemingly random arrests of musicians, breakdancers and protesters. Marches came and went in the corridor between the park and Herald Square (one block east of Madison Square Garden), heckling delegates and trying to dodge the hordes of police on scooters, horseback and foot.

One unfortunate group was trapped on East 16th St. mid-afternoon, when police sealed both ends of the block and wrapped them in street-wide orange netting while bystanders crowding Union Square East launched invectives and a bottle at the cops. Like everywhere else in the city, the moment any group came together as a coherent protest, they attracted the swift and forceful attention of the police, whether any laws were broken or not.

Major protests also convened at Ground Zero, where hundreds of pacifists marched, and at Wall Street, where one group attempted to close the district off with string. Police overreaction ended up clogging the street, with emergency vehicles doing the protesters' work for them.

"Something tells me we won around 4 p.m. There was too much going on in too many places, we were completely impossible to



FOOLS ON PARADE: Clown Bloc brings the bum's rush.

ignore," a protester named Marco commented on nyc.indymedia.org while the actions were still in full swing. By evening, the convention had been upstaged for a second day.

With much of the press playing along with the NYPD's fear-mongering in the weeks leading up to the convention, some Democrats, including former '60s radical Todd Gitlin, denounced possible disruption as playing into the hands of Republicans. Democratic National Committee Chair Terry McAuliffe dissociated the party from the protests. People on the street seem-

ed more concerned with letting Bush off too easy.

"It's not just Bush, it's the Bush agenda," said Phelan, noting that Kerry's Democrats have gone along with virtually everything Bush has done that pissed him off.

A31 was planned in the decentralized (and gruellingly long) "spokescouncil" meetings favored by the Global Social Justice movement. Made up of numerous "affinity groups," the spokescouncil agreed on parameters such as non-violence, while many of the groups kept their particular plans secret

until the actions kicked off.

"We want more than speeches and protest pens," said the initial call for the actions on www.A31.org. "We want change. We want to take democracy from the Halliburtons and Enrons and bring it back to town halls, schools, and neighborhoods. A true democracy thrives on diversity: and, while we celebrate our differences, we stand united in our opposition to the dismantling of our dreams, united in our opposition to the dangerous direction of things. In this we make common cause with the people of the world."

action reports

Detention Dissent

At 11:30 a.m. Aug. 31, about 300 protesters organized by the Philly Cluster and Saber Civil Liberties marched on Thomas Paine Park on Centre Street to voice disagreement with Bush's immigration policies.

"It's a visible show of dissent against the immigration process that's turned into a massive drag-net," said organizer Alan Haberman. He added that since September 11, thousands of innocent Arabs, South Asians and North Africans have been imprisoned on immigration charges and held indefinitely or deported.

The march took the protesters within shouting distance of the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, formerly known as the Immigration and Nationalization Service, at Federal Plaza, a route and destination negotiated with cops on the scene, despite the protesters' lack of a permit. At Thomas Paine Park, the group put on a theater act featuring hooded detainees. Speakers following the act includ-

ed Tarik Abdel-Muhti, son of Farouk Abdel-Muhti, a Palestinian civil rights activist who came to the states in the 1970's. Abdel-Muhti was detained in April 2002 and released 718 days later, having spent 250 of those days in solitary confinement. He died shortly after his release. His son promised to pursue a case against the government for Abdel-Muhti's death.

Only one arrest occurred, when the cops ordered a protester out of a tree. Witnesses said the man, Will Hewitt, complied with the order and got the plastic handcuffs anyway. —*Timothy Sparkman*

Over 100 Nabbed at Ground Zero Peace Procession

A peaceful march from Ground Zero, commemorating the deaths of people killed by war and terror around the world, had not even advanced a block when the police rounded up and arrested over 100 people. The demonstrators were marching in double file on the side-

walk on Fulton Street, following the cops' directions, when they were fenced in and surrounded by over a hundred police officers.

"This is so obviously a peaceful march that this is really distressing," said Katy, a New York City resident who participated in the protest. "The cops decided to stop the whole thing before it started," said Jim, a demonstrator from Arlington, Virginia.

Approximately 200 demonstrators continued to march and made their way quietly, in pairs, up to 28th St, where the protest culminated in a "die-in" on Broadway. Invoking the memory of people killed around the world at the hands of Republican foreign policy, 54 people lay down in the middle of the street.

The protest was organized by the War Resisters League, School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch), DC Antiwar Network and Voices in the Wilderness. "We want to bring to the Republican convention the message that a terrible tragedy befell the U.S. in 2001, but because of a Bush-led foreign policy, Ground Zeroes continue to erupt all over the

(continued on page 9)



War Resisters' Broadway "die-in"

YONI MISHAL

world," said Eric LeCompte, outreach coordinator for SOA Watch. The organization is working to close the U.S.-military-run training institute at Fort Benning, Georgia, which is notorious for sharpening the skills of Latin American human-rights abusers.

For the Rev. Tom Reiber-Martinez of All Souls Bethlehem Church in Brooklyn's Kensington neighborhood, "the focus of the protest was the 10,000 Iraqi dead." He said that when he was visiting Baghdad a few weeks before the US invasion, "The shops and streets were full of people. They kept asking me, 'Why? Why are you going to attack us?'" —*Isabel Macdonald*

Vox Pop Rocks Fox

Organized by the women's social justice organization Code Pink, the Fox "Shut up-a-thon" began as one of the more light-hearted demonstrations on a day of direct action against the Republican convention and other right-wing and war-contractor offices. Crowds chanted "Shut up!" towards Fox's windows, as a marching band played in the background. However, police quickly moved in and split up the group between all corners of Sixth Ave. and 48th St., first penning them in on the sidewalks and then the streets. Medea Benjamin, one of the Code Pink organizers, was arrested for refusing to relinquish her megaphone. She was released shortly afterward along with two to three others taken into custody.

Many mainstream news outlets accept glitzy government press releases as fact without questioning them. Fox, say activists, much more consciously pushes a far-right agenda — despite its "Fair and Balanced" slogan. "The idea that they are unbiased is a complete fallacy," said one demonstrator.

"It's really great that the media movement is coming out into the streets a lot more than it has been," said Pete TriDish of the Prometheus Radio Project. Prometheus was one of the plaintiffs in a lawsuit that successfully challenged FCC regulations put forth last year that would have allowed the major corporate networks to own more media outlets. "It's not just a policy issue, it's not just something for lawyers in D.C., to decide how many stations a corporate chain can own. It's really something that the public can know a lot about and can participate in the decision-making process."

The push for media reform, said demonstrator Loel Boyers, is "an organic outcropping of the broader social justice movements. We're now faced with a conventional news media that are essentially delivery devices for a kind of skewed vision of what the truth is. Reasonable people with a sense of purpose are going to start other forms of independent journalism."

—*Josh Sisco*

Bryant Park School of Hard Knocks

The Green Bloc, a group of gardener activists from the Bay Area, had intended to hold a training session on the steps of the Main Library at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. "We're going to orient folks unfamiliar with direct action and civil disobedience," said Meddle Bolger, a member of the bloc. Bolger said they would head to Herald Square afterward "to assert our rights to occupy that space," only they didn't get the chance.

A Republican group reserved the library's Bartos Forum for an event that evening. Most everyone else was unaware. That, plus the public announcement that the group would be holding a training session at the site, produced a large and edgy police presence. They didn't wait long to clear the area for the delegates' arrival.

It exploded with the arrest of a young protester on the lower steps of the library's front entrance. That brought a rush of people including New Yorkers on their way home from work and protesters. They surrounded the cops, screaming, "Let him go!" The cops reacted by bringing in reinforcements who made a series of other arrests, including that of a picture-snapping elderly man who was mobbed by two riot-clad policemen.

"We're allowed to be here, we're allowed to protest," screamed Florida-native Maria Kocher. Maria and her husband, Bill Kocher, are pilots with United Airlines and had just flown into town to attend Wednesday's labor protest. "There was nothing out of control going on here," said Maria, "they made it out of control."

"I've never seen anything like this," said NYC teacher Kathy Roberts, as the crowd hustled down 5th Avenue to escape a troop of cops yelling, "Move, Move, Move." "I was just sitting on the steps," Roberts said, "I thought it was public space." —*Timothy Sparkman*

Delegate Buses Blocked in Herald Square Takeover

Perhaps the purest example of nonviolent direct action came at 8:30 p.m., as 12 protesters stepped before nine delegate-laden buses, sat down, linked arms, and donned black Abu Ghraib hoods at the intersection of Sixth Ave. and West 35th St.

Mobbed by media and encouraged by the shouts of other protesters, the 12 sat calmly under the gaze of six riot cops who took up positions behind them. A white-shirt police officer appeared on the scene a few minutes later and made his way to the first of the delegate buses. He talked with the delegates and another cop in the bus, and then, to the amazement of the crowd, the delegates filed off the

bus and began to make their way to the barricade and on to Madison Square Garden.

The crowd briefly hushed, and then roared invectives at the smirking delegates. Cops rushed in with batons to guard their way. The white-shirt rushed over with a steel barricade, and then police pushed the protesters back and scooted the media away from the stoic 12 who still sat calmly on the street.

With protesters and media cleared, the cops cuffed the 12 sitters one by one. The protesters went limp, forcing the cops to carry them away, as the crowd cheered. The whole episode lasted about 20 minutes.

The night's last march mushroomed spontaneously just after nine o'clock in Herald Square and veered onto W. 35th St. "We just decided to march," said Annie Burns. "They had us penned up [on 34th and Sixth]. The cops pushed us back, so we're taking it to the streets."

It was the last of several attempts by the remaining protesters, numbering more than 200, to penetrate the police's Sixth Avenue blockade and get to Madison Square Garden. They hit that barricade again and turned back after no more than five minutes, intent on finding another route.

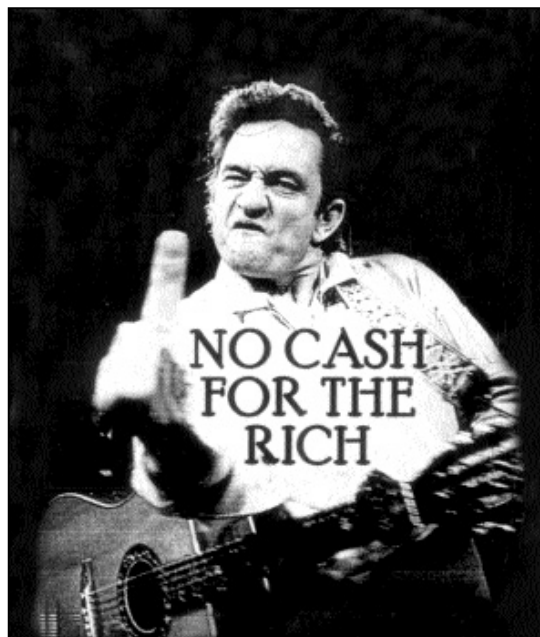
Suddenly, a protester showed up with crates of bananas, apples and bottled water, which the group took with delight before proceeding away from the Garden, toward Fifth Avenue. They were met halfway down the block by 20 cops on mopeds, however, who cut off their route and started moving down the middle of the street. Then the cops moved to the sidewalks and cut the group in half, capturing about 80 protesters within a smaller barricade. The protesters stood back against the walls on either side of the street as cops barked commands to get off the sidewalk and warned the rest of the group to stand back. That free remnant was stuck behind a line of riot cops, shouting for the police to let the 80 go and demanding justification for the detainment.

"You'll get it, too, if you don't get moving," was the answer.

Starting on the north side of the street, the police began lunging one by one at the mass of protesters, picking individuals out of the crowd and shoving them into the wall or down on the streets. After 15 minutes, they had arrested them all and set to work on the protesters struck on the south side. They grabbed one man who had a movie camera on his shoulder and flung him onto his face on the sidewalk. Another man was pushed to the ground, hitting his head on the curb.

"We need more people," said Steven, who has owned a fashion store on West 35th St. for 16 years, as he watched the police line and the arrestees. "This should be the beginning of a groundswell."

—*Timothy Sparkman*



Burning Ring of Fire Greet GOP Delegates

They're ugly. They're evil. They're fascists and they're liars. The G.O.P. belongs in a burning ring of fire!" So chanted the Man and Woman in Black Bloc, about 500 people who turned out on the afternoon of Aug. 31 to protest a Johnny Cash theme party for the Tennessee Republican delegates, sponsored by the American Gas Association, at Sotheby's auction house. It was an odd mix of folkie singalong and venom-venting ragefest, people gathering around guitarists playing "Folsom Prison Blues" and "I Walk the Line" and then turning to spew abuse at the "rich folks eating in their fancy dining cars."

The protest was the brainchild of Rine Siegal, a 22-year-old Brooklyn activist. "The Republicans are exploiting 9/11 by coming to our city, and now they're exploiting another fallen hero. It's not right," she said. "He doesn't belong to any political party." Cash may have avoided explicit political commitments in his lifetime, but his lyrics definitely hit a chord with the RNC protesters: "I wear the black for the poor and the beaten down." "San Quentin, I hate every inch of you." The concept caught on quickly.

"They're trying to take everything. Leave us Johnny Cash!" exclaimed Karen, a 40-year-old writer from the Lower East Side, who wore a black cowboy hat and a silver 45-spindle necklace.

The protest began quietly, with about 100 people singing in a pen across the street from Sotheby's. One group from upstate New York brought their children. But it got more intense when a busload of delegates arrived. Protesters rushed across the street to confront them, chanting, "Welcome to New York! Now go the fuck home!" Riot police penned them in quickly.

The next hour and a half were a standoff, with middle-aged Republican white men, younger frat-boy types, and women in Nancy Reagan fashions — off-white or pistachio suits, garish red scarves, and frozen hairdos — being ushered in and out between the lines of riot cops. "Grave robbers! Fascist motherfuckers!" the protesters taunted. One couple drew chants of "Fat old man! Trophy wife!" — which almost got the expressionless police to crack a smile.

One woman, triangle-shaped tattoos covering most of her face, said she wished her eyes could shoot lightning. Some Republicans avoided eye contact with the protesters, while others grinned at them, either nervously or with contemptuous amusement. Then suddenly the mood would shift, as the guitarists began picking "The Man in Black" or "This Land Is Your Land" and the penned-up picketers sang along.

"It was the perfect mix of anger and positive stuff," said a dreadlocked 27-year-old woman from Asheville, North Carolina. "We definitely need to be fucking angry. They fucking stole his shit. But it's good for us to be out here singing his songs."

"I was really pleased," Rian Siegal concluded. "We sang loud and they heard us. I think we really did make them ashamed."

—*Steven Wishnia*

THE SHADOW KNOWS

GOING UNDERCOVER AS AN RNC VOLUNTEER

BY PETE SALAME

I got up at 5 a.m. last Saturday morning and headed to the Sheraton at 53rd and 7th to pick up my convention volunteer I.D. and T-shirt.

From 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. I amiably talked politics with various volunteers and staff. There's a lot to be learned from just talking, especially when you have the potential to make people reconsider their opinions about the grand old government.

Here's how it started. Two guys in front of me were talking about the military.

"Half my family is in the services, those activists have no respect for their sacrifice."

"I'm with you, did you hear about that guy who went AWOL and moved to Canada?"

"Like Kerry showed disrespect for his country and fellow soldiers after he got back from Vietnam."

"They need to understand that when they sign up they're going to have to fight!"

I figured I could make my presence known with a modest interjection based on an experience I had in 2002, daytripping to Nablus with a Palestinian peace group.

I asked the guys if they'd ever seen combat themselves. I shared my opinion that war isn't about pride or courage or patriotism, it is about

fear. The fear soldiers have when they don't know if or when the fire is going to come down on them; the fear of civilians whose homes have become a battlefield.

No one's immune to the horrors of war, and all soldiers want is for it to end so they can go home. I tried to speak for the "cowardly deserters" in an impassioned plea to the manly military men. I didn't hit them with a guilt trip though, and they weren't arguing back when they saw that I spoke from the heart.

My point made, we moved to lighter topics. The guys were nice, the younger one all up and ready to talk about the origins of his "conservative" views, and the older one complaining about the liberal hypocrisy he encountered while working in a service role at a university.

This is the point where just to provide an example of how *not* to question beliefs and potentially change people's minds. The guy sitting next to me introduced himself by tersely declaring to anyone who would listen — "I'm a liberal."

I thought to myself, "Oooh, how shocking!"

"I'm voting for Kerry"

No one cares.

Mr. Liberalnuts starts jabbering about how Ashcroft was anointed with cookie dough as part of some religious ritual. It's not that I don't believe him, but I'm annoyed by his lack of subtlety. If you can't slip this stuff into a conversation naturally, then at least print out some articles about it and place them conspicuously around the room!

The conservative youth with a military family turned toward me again and I introduced them — Tao, the liberal numbnuts, and Tom, the self-styled conservative.

Tao sucked big time. All confrontation, no construction.

He was trying to do all the convincing, assuming that whenever he spit a factoid, Tom would want to believe it. Conservative Tom was just plain nicer and smarter. Tao attacked Bush's character, Tom attacked Kerry's.

The debate didn't last long. Volunteers received their ID cards and T-shirts, and were separated into groups for each airport — Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark.

A staff member I spoke to, from the municipal tourism bureau, said it was necessary for the bureau to take an active role as this is the biggest convention ever to hit New York. I half-jokingly asked why sci-fi conventions with potentially larger attendance numbers don't get such special greeting from the city. She said it was the political and economic significance that mattered. I told her that *Star Trek VI* was a very politically significant movie, but she mistook it for the one with the whales.

Point is, New York taxpayer dollars are making the Republican convention happen, and probably even paying for my nice new *Monster.com* T-shirt. Did we vote for this shit?

Pretty much the whole time, I spoke with other volunteers. And you know what I learned about them?

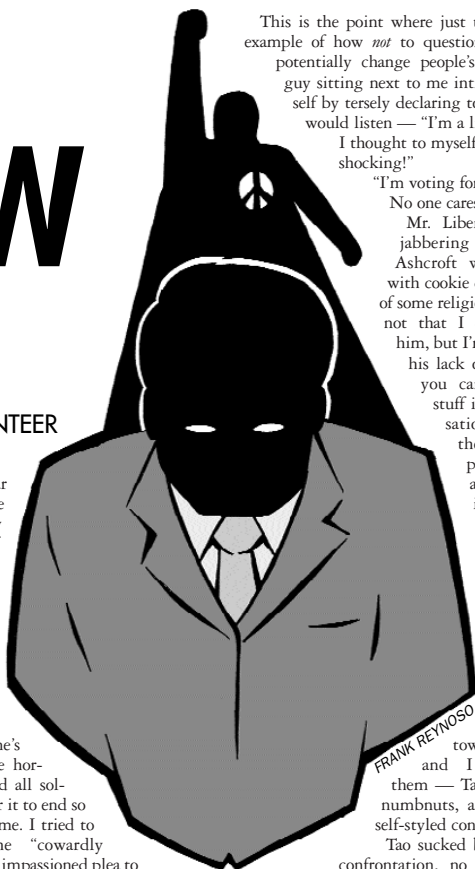
Inside each Conservative beats the secret heart of a Libertarian. It is to this that one must appeal, and it is by this they can be freed from their slavery to complacent faith and false premises!

Who doesn't agree on curtailing the excess waste and greed-fueled inhumanities of giant corporations? Who doesn't agree on funding education and providing opportunity to the poor? Who doesn't agree that there should be some sort of safety net when you're down and out?

Unlike Tao, I didn't take it upon myself to be the sole source of enlightening information for these conservative Republican lads and ladies. All I needed was to present to them a friendly and competent human being who could agree with them where it mattered most, and might have well reasoned dissenting opinions worth listening to.

But for me to actually hit home and change people's minds about politics, I've got to let our discussions sink in. They can put two and two together when they're hit with news that complements my suggestions. The promo DVDs of "Bush Family Fortunes: The Best Democracy Money Can Buy" that I'll be mailing to a personally collected list of addresses should do the trick. The people I'm sending it to will hate it, but won't be able to ignore it. And it'll get them thinking that maybe there's something to all those opposing views.

So this is how I fight for my political cause, by making friends and mailing them the best anti-government documentary films I can find.



BY BENNETT BAUMER

In Times Square on Sunday, Aug. 29, a protester and a Republican delegate faced off to argue about the Vietnam and Iraq wars, gay marriage and family values. The protester, clad in a peace T-shirt, had come to the Mouse Bloc's direct action to confront delegates attending Broadway shows, and the

RNC Delegates Talk Culture War

delegate, clad in khakis and a dress shirt, had come to see the show. What could better represent the so-called cultural war in America?

"There's a cultural war out there and both parties politicize it," said Republican delegate Calvin Hawkins, a black lawyer from Gary, Indiana.

Hawkins, born in Brooklyn and raised in segregated Washington D.C., marched for civil rights in 1963. Now, he speaks passionately about family values and the Christian church, and how they provided support for him to get through school and stay out of trouble.

"Politics reflect cultural values," he said. "In segregated D.C., even the houses that were shacks were clean. You didn't even know it was a ghetto." In contrast, he continued, present-day Gary is home to abandoned storefronts, steel mills that are skeletons of their former selves, and a high murder rate.

Georgia delegate Wesley Clark (no relation to the general), a Southern Baptist and distribution center worker, also emphasized religion. He described himself as "100 percent

pro-life" and felt some of the protesters were "way-far left and didn't want us here."

But when some delegates were pressed to define the cultural war, they spoke of a vague notion that seemed more rooted in punditry than in reality. Others, like Nebraska delegate David Kramer, a lawyer from Omaha who said he favored smaller government and more local autonomy, did not identify themselves as a social conservatives. "What are the cultural wars? I don't have the perception that there are cultural wars. One of the great things about America is we're a melting pot and folks have different values."

Kramer encountered anti-RNC protesters as he went to see a Broadway show, as did Indiana delegate Bonnie Gabrielle.

"[The protest] was very large, impressive and energetic, though I've never seen so many dumb people in my life," she said. "The police had it well contained — enough for me to take pictures."

Hawkins was more sympathetic. "I was at the march in 1963 and the march in 1965. I've got a kinship with the protesters."

A former civil-rights marcher might seem a strange fit for the party of erstwhile segregationists Trent Lott and the late Strom Thurmond. When questioned about the economic devastation in Gary and how "family values" could put food on the table, find you a job or obtain affordable health care, Hawkins seemed to reverse himself.

"Politicizing these cultural issues is a smokescreen for other issues," he said. "We need socialized health care, but that won't go over well with the GOP or the Democrats, for that matter. As a lawyer, I see how one illness can take people to bankruptcy court."

Hawkins also told a story of being at a rally attended by Thurmond, and said if he had known that the late senator had fathered a biracial daughter, he would have hugged him and welcomed him to the "family." He said he was being facetious.

Apparently sensing then he was straying too far from the party line, Hawkins then praised President Bush for being married to the same woman for his entire life, and faulted Bill Clinton for his sexual lapses.

NYC INDYMEDIA INVESTIGATED!

BY CHRIS ANDERSON

Days before the Republican National Convention opened in New York City, the U.S. Department of Justice opened a criminal investigation into a posting on the New York Independent Media Center's "open publishing newswire." The department said the investigation was into possible online "voter intimidation" of RNC delegates. But lawyers with the American Civil Liberties Union and members of the New York Indymedia collective say the probe, conducted by the Secret Service, is more about intimidating political dissent than about enforcing the law.

On Aug. 19, Calyx Internet Access, the Internet Service Provider (ISP) for New York Indymedia, was issued a subpoena as part of a federal grand jury investigation into a list of 2,200 Republican delegate names that appeared on the Indymedia web site. An anonymous person had posted the delegate information and written that RNC delegates "should know not only what people think of the platform that they will ratify, but that they are not welcome in New York City." The subpoena demanded Indymedia's subscriber and registration information, billing records, and contact information. It said that information was needed for an investigation into possible voter harassment.

Why would the Department of Justice subpoena Indymedia's Internet provider and not the Indymedia website itself?

"The way the Internet works is that there is no central point of access, it's a network of networks," explains Mike Castleman of the NYC-IMC tech collective. "If you want to connect to the Internet, you probably need to go through someone called an Internet service provider to get hooked in."

Various provisions in the 2000 Digital Millennium Copyright Act and other laws regulating digital content make ISPs especially vulnerable to government harassment.

"Government intimidation of ISPs happens all the time," says Castleman. "The government may not want the actual party of interest to know that they're being subpoenaed, or it may be easier to intimidate the ISP. While Calyx has really stood by Indymedia, a lot of times an ISP will just say, 'uh-oh, my customer is in legal trouble, I better drop this person right away.'"

Indymedia and the ACLU call the federal allegations "baseless."

"We think it's ironic that the Secret Service inquiry would refer to voter intimidation of RNC delegates," argues Ann Beeson of the ACLU, which is representing Calyx and Indymedia system administrators in the case. "It's the Secret Service who is intimidating people who are exercising their right to protest."

Castleman also notes that the Justice Department request would be impossible to fulfill even if Indymedia wanted to. "We have two defenses against having your personal information subpoenaed. First, we wouldn't hand it over, and second, we don't even have it." The New York Indymedia web site allows anonymous posting to its newswire and does not log the IP addresses of its users, making it almost impossible to definitively pinpoint the identity of anonymous posters.

On Monday, Aug. 30, New York Indymedia and the ACLU gave the Department of Justice the names and contact information for four IMC computer system administrators. "The administrators in



EYE SPY: With the NYPD cruising over the city's protests all week, surveillance was not discreet. PHOTO: BRENDAN HOFFMAN

question felt it was OK to provide their contact information to the Department of Justice, since they had nothing to hide," says Beeson. Indymedia also decided to publicize the case, hoping that the government would be shamed into dropping it. "At the moment, our strategy seems to have worked," she says. Calyx representatives had been scheduled to appear before a grand jury on Aug. 31, but the hearing was canceled after the story broke, although the criminal probe remains open.

Castleman remains fairly sanguine. "Although this case demonstrates the state's desire to suppress dissent, practically, in this case, the information they asked for does not exist. So politically it's a huge deal, but in practical terms it is fairly irrelevant."

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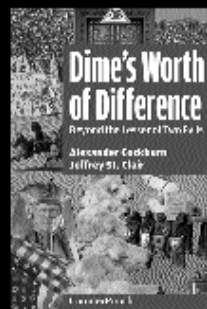
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